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WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Preparatory Committee
Fourth session
Geneva, 19-30 April 1993
Agenda item 5

STATUS OF PREPARATION OF PUBLICATIONS, STUDIES AND DOCUMENTS FOR THE WORLD CONFERENCE

Note by the Secretariat

Addendum

Contribution from the World Federalist Movement

The attention of the Preparatory Committee is drawn to the contribution from the World Federalist Movement, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (category II). The documents point out that since 1990, in more than 50 countries, educators, social justice community workers and human rights advocates have adopted a People's Decade of Human Rights Education (1991-2001) as an organizing strategy to reach "all people" and involve "all sectors of society" in learning about human rights. This grass-roots strategy is intended to familiarize people in every nation with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Introduction

1. Article 1 (3) of the Charter of the United Nations lists as a purpose of the United Nations "promoting and encouraging respect for human rights ...". In adopting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the General Assembly referred explicitly to education when it proclaimed the Declaration "as a standard of achievement for all people and all nations" and to the end that "every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect of these rights and freedoms ...". (emphasis added)

2. Since 1990, in more than 50 countries around the world, educators, social justice community workers and human rights advocates have adopted a People's Decade of Human Rights Education, 1991-2001, as a collaborative, organizing strategy to reach "all people" and involve "all sectors of society", in learning about human rights.

3. The aim of this effort has been to elaborate and implement grass-roots, mass education in human rights so that all people in every nation will be familiar with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The People's Decade of Human Rights Education has been an instrument for enhancing at the grass-roots level formal, non-formal and informal education in human rights worldwide. It is envisaged as a mechanism of solidarity endowing human rights education with visibility and prestige and a critical networking instrument for sharing methodologies and experiences necessary to empower people to participate in the decisions that determine their lives.

4. In three years of activities various organizing committees of the People's Decade of Human Rights Education were established nationally and regionally. In a joint effort they worked towards strengthening networking capabilities which enable the harnessing and the sharing of pertinent materials and methodologies from a wide variety of sources on many themes and with different communities.

5. Strategy and methodology training of trainers workshops as part of the People's Decade of Human Rights Education were organized in the former Czechoslovakia, Chile, Uruguay, Costa Rica, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Benin, Ghana, the United States, and the West Bank to mention a few, effectively combining international expertise with local knowledge and needs. The workshops encouraged local participants to build educational strategies based on indigenous traditions while gaining from the experience of educators from around the world who have undertaken similar programmes.

6. On the regional and international levels several workshops of educators and activists were organized to identify needs and constituencies; share materials, methodologies and experiences; discuss strategies; and develop specific work plans for the advancement of formal and popular education in human rights and democracy.

7. Extensive networking has been done by the various national organizing committees seeking to gain international recognition for the People's Decade. As more groups and individuals are adopting the People's Decade as their own organizing strategy, an emerging support systems seeks to facilitate educators, human rights advocates, and social justice grass-roots activists in establishing resource centres to make human rights education an ongoing activity in their community.

8. On 9 March 1993, as a direct result of these activities, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in its resolution 1993/56, "Education and human rights", has recommended that "the General Assembly take the appropriate measures to declare a decade for human rights education ...". This resolution was adopted without a vote. At the same time a world plan of action was developed and adopted in Montreal at the UNESCO International Congress on Education for Human Rights and Democracy, 8-11 March 1993, at which time activists of the People's Decade have called for recognizing human rights education itself as a human right, a prerequisite to the full realization of human rights. At the UNESCO Congress various recommendations made by those working for the People's Decade were adopted by the Drafting Committee and the Congress itself declaring support for popular movements for human rights education.

9. Furthermore, the international community of educators, human rights advocates and social justice activists have come to recognize human rights education as a human right, as an integral part of the development process and as an area meriting financial support.

10. There is now universal affirmation of the right to know one's rights as fundamental to the realization of human rights. In many United Nations instruments human rights education has been recognized implicitly and explicitly as a human right. The absence of human rights education contributes to the violation of human rights. The absence of human rights education feeds the never ending vicious cycles of ignorance and further violation, and deprives the people of the world of a fundamental instrument of empowerment and protection of human dignity.

11. A United Nations decade of human rights education called for by the Commission on Human Rights and the objectives set in 1990 for the People's Decade of Human Rights Education complement each other in an implicit call for planned cooperation to achieve mutual goals. These goals coincide to a considerable degree with UNESCO's World Plan of Action and the aims of the World Conference on Human Rights.

A call for support

12. In the light of resolution 1993/56, "Education and human rights", adopted at the forty-ninth session of the Commission on Human Rights:

We call on all Governments to acknowledge the role of the civil society present in the People's Decade of Human Rights Education and take into consideration that since 1991, individuals and non-governmental organizations in more than 50 countries have adopted, as an organizing strategy, the People's Decade of Human Rights Education and that in the development of plans for a United Nations decade, Governments recognize this ongoing popular movement and express support for its activities to promote mass education in human rights;

The United Nations Centre for Human Rights in implementing the United Nations decade should take into consideration the People's Decade of Human Rights Education as a viable, popular movement, ready to cooperate with the United Nations decade and work towards the coordination of efforts in implementing mass education in human rights;

We further call on all Governments to affirm human rights education as a human right and mass education in human rights as an important element in the United Nations future human rights programme. Human rights education is the key to popular support for international and domestic accountability and action, without which progress in human rights is improbable.

13. The World Conference on Human Rights is a key forum at which support for the People's Decade of Human Rights Education should be expressed, realizing its importance to the implementation of the United Nations decade. We call on the Preparatory Committee to support a reference to mass education in human rights and to the People's Decade of Human Rights Education. We propose that the World Conference:

- Affirm human rights education itself as a human right;

- Issue a call for mass education in human rights;

- Urge Member States, educators and non-governmental organizations to support and cooperate with the People's Decade of Human Rights Education, already in progress, and as they implement the United Nations decade in their countries;

- Propose the creation of an international fund for human rights education to support non-governmental organizational activities in human rights education;

- Urge the United Nations Commission on Human Rights to add human rights education as a regular agenda item at its annual sessions and to appoint a special rapporteur to monitor human rights education;

- Urge that reporting on human rights conditions under the covenants and conventions should specify the extent and scope of formal and non-formal human rights education in the reporting State. This requirement should be added as a measure of prevention of human rights violations and of promotion of their respect;

- Urge all Member States to join in the process that will lead to the establishment of national training and resource centres for human rights education in their countries.

14. The objective of the following document is to propose that the Preparatory Committee favour including the following ideas into the final documents of the World Conference and in one or more specific resolutions.

Draft proposal for consideration by the Preparatory Committee

The World Conference on Human Rights,

Considering the importance of fostering a civil society where people know and enjoy their human rights,

Aware of resolution 1993/56 of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights recommending that the General Assembly take the appropriate measures to declare a decade of human rights education and the recommendation adopted at the UNESCO International Congress on Education for Human Rights and Democracy (8-11 March 1993),

Aware of many existing non-governmental initiatives to mobilize efforts in this direction under the People's Decade of Human Rights Education, 1991-2001,

Believing that the People's Decade of Human Rights Education should be recognized by Governments and intergovernmental organizations as an important effort for the realization of the United Nations decade,

1. Calls upon international, regional and national non-governmental organizations, and in particular those concerned with women, labour, development and the environment, as well as other social justice groups, human rights advocates, educators, religious organizations and the media, to increase their involvement in formal and informal education in human rights;

2. Expresses its support for the People's Decade of Human Rights Education which has already commenced in many parts of the world;

3. Requests the Secretary-General to consider the establishment of an international fund to support the human rights education activities of non-governmental organizations;

4. Requests the treaty monitoring bodies to request States parties to include in their reports the extent and scope of formal and non-formal human rights education in the reporting State;

5. Calls for the addition of a regular item on human rights education on the agenda of the Commission on Human Rights;

6. Invites the Commission on Human Rights to appoint a special rapporteur for human rights education;

7. Declares that human rights education is itself a human right, as has been recognized in several United Nations documents;

8. Invites all States to guarantee full protection to individuals and organizations working in the field of human rights education;

9. Calls for all States, in coordination with the non-governmental organization community, to develop in their countries resource centres for human rights education.